

During the listening session, Dr. Jill Stein, a physician and President of the Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities, and Dr. Bill Bress, State Toxicologist for the Vermont Department of Health, detailed the serious and often life-threatening health effects of mercury exposure through consumption of contaminated fish. Nearly 10 percent of American women have high mercury blood levels above EPA's safe health threshold. Pregnant women who consume even small amounts of fish can inadvertently put their developing babies at risk of mental retardation, seizures, cerebral palsy, vision and hearing problems, abnormal gait and speech, and learning disabilities. EPA has estimated that 630,000 children are born at risk each year due to mercury exposure in the womb. This is twice EPA's previous estimate.

An astonishing 50 percent of Americans who eat fish regularly exceed the mercury health limit, and 10 percent exceed the limit by a factor of four. Adults are also susceptible to developing heart, kidney, and immune system disorders due to mercury consumption. Anglers and certain ethnic groups who eat large amounts of fish face two to five times these health risks. Clearly, dramatically curbing mercury pollution will improve all of our lives.

Dr. Steve Petron, Board Member of the National Wildlife Federation and Senior Ecosystems Scientist for CH2M Hill, demonstrated how toxic mercury pollution from power plants harms our Nation's aquatic wildlife. Those species that depend on fish for food are the most at risk. Because of this, loons, bald eagles, otters, amphibians, and other animals are already facing or could soon face decline. And lastly, Dr. Praveen Amar, Director of Science and Policy for the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management, NESCAUM, represented State air quality regulators by stressing that mercury control technologies are available and affordable, and by expressing the need for smart Federal environmental laws to drive technology innovation and application. As a recent NESCAUM report found, "Where strong regulatory drivers exist, substantial technological improvements and steady reductions in control costs follow."

That's where Congress comes in. We are elected to serve the people of this Nation. Where people are becoming sick and are dying because of air pollution, something must be done. We must never knowingly allow such suffering to continue if we have the ability to act, and we do. Time and time again, mothers and fathers, doctors, scientists, and community members ask for our help.

At the bare minimum, we should be protecting current law. But to truly benefit the public good, we must pass tough legislation to force dirty power plants and other polluters to start behaving like good citizens. The air is not their toxic waste dump. It is not theirs to pollute for free, even though

this administration is encouraging them to think that way. If it belongs to anyone, the air belongs to those children who play outdoors, or those families who go fishing and take trips to our scenic national parks, or to the poorest of us who are unlucky enough to live next to a smokestack. The air belongs to all of us. We should treat it like the most precious resource we know. Americans from around the country have learned this important lesson. Congress and this administration must now do the same.

#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. On May 1, 2003, Senator KENNEDY and I introduced the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, a bill that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

In February 1999, Steve Garcia was returning to his home from a party wearing women's clothing and shoulder length hair. He died of a gunshot wound to the shoulder and because none of his jewelry was stolen, police suspect that he was targeted because of the way he was dressed.

I believe that Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### RETIREMENT OF TOM RYAN

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, March 1 marks a very special occasion—although it is with mixed feelings I report that Tom Ryan, the key Department of Labor Budget Analyst for employment and training programs is retiring following more than 32 years of a most distinguished career. As the members of the Appropriations Committee can attest, Mr. Ryan's work in this area has been extraordinary, in its breadth, its depth, and in its effectiveness. As needs arose and even when crisis has come to the lives of so many job seekers throughout our Nation, Mr. Ryan has been a pillar of strength in helping people as he worked tirelessly with us to ensure that funding for the right training opportunities were available when job seekers needed them.

On behalf of the members of the Appropriations Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Ryan for his vision which has so often guided us in formulating creative solutions to funding jobs training programs, in caring for the people we serve—many of those who are in critical need of assistance. The complexities of funding these programs during the challenging years of

fiscal austerity have been met with a determination to find solutions, and the countless people receiving job training and employment assistance are well-served, due in no small measure, to Mr. Ryan's efforts and his devotion to these endeavors. For these efforts and so many more, we extend our congratulations to Mr. Ryan and wish him an enjoyable and well-deserved retirement.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO ERNIE MARX

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I take a moment today to pay tribute to Ernie Marx of Louisville, KY for his service to the people of Kentucky and his willingness to teach understanding and compassion to our Commonwealth's youth.

Mr. Marx is a survivor of the Holocaust and has used this tragic event in human history as an inspiration to educate the youth of our country about tolerance and respect. He has focused his efforts on middle and high school students, speaking about his experiences before hundreds of different groups.

One such event was on Tuesday, April 29, 2003, when Mr. Marx spoke at the annual Yom HaShoah commemoration at Fort Knox, KY. Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, is an important day of reflection for Americans and people throughout the world. His own message to our soldiers at Fort Knox was about hate and tolerance. He told the soldiers that they can prevent a Holocaust, saying, "You are our hope and are fight for our freedom."

This fall Mr. Marx led his 54th trip to Washington, DC to educate children and citizens about the Holocaust. He brings these groups, primarily students, to visit the Holocaust Museum and teaches them about tolerance and understanding. I am certain he will continue to lead these trips in the tradition of the Holocaust Museum's mission of education.

From Atherton High School in Louisville, KY to the Henry County Middle School in New Castle, KY, Ernie Marx has had a profound impact on the youth of the Louisville region. I would like to honor his dedication, leadership and commitment to the people of Kentucky. •

#### MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

H.R. 3783. An act to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with